



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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DUCKS UNLIMITED MEMBERS GIVE LARGEST CASH DONATION EVER TO MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION FUND

Members of Ducks Unlimited, Inc., the Nation's largest private waterfowl organization, have raised over \$1.4 million to acquire wetlands for the National Wildlife Refuge System, Interior Secretary Don Hodel announced today.

Their collective contribution is the largest single cash donation ever made to the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. This fund is used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to buy wetlands and other wildlife habitat for ducks, geese, and other waterfowl.

Accepting the record donation from Ducks Unlimited (DU) President Peter H. Coors, Secretary Hodel said, "Ducks Unlimited has been a major partner of ours in the ongoing Duck Stamp campaign, and with this donation it becomes the largest cash contributor in history to the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. DU's more than 600,000 members in North America have given a tremendous boost to our effort to protect vital wetlands and waterfowl resources."

Ducks Unlimited raised the money in 1984 during the 50th anniversary of the Federal Duck Stamp through the auction of 1,000 limited-edition, custom-grade 12-gauge shotguns manufactured by Sturm, Ruger and Company, Inc. Ducks Unlimited purchased the firearms from the Connecticut arms company for auction to DU members at the organization's annual fundraising banquets held by local chapters throughout the United States and Canada.

The over-and-under shotguns bear engravings of the 1934 and 1984 Duck Stamps and Interior Department and Ducks Unlimited logos. The auctions raised \$1,420,900 from DU members, with the largest single bid topping \$7,000.

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Secretary Hodel serves as chairman of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, which will oversee the expenditure of the DU money. "Wetlands conservation is an investment in the future," he said. "While their values to wildlife and fisheries are readily apparent, they also serve the added function of controlling floods, restoring water quality, and recharging groundwater. Their preservation is simply good stewardship for the next generation. DU's historic donation is a fine example of the spirit of my 'Take Pride in America' theme, by which we at the Interior Department hope to encourage all Americans to share a greater awareness and take increased responsibility for the wise management of the Nation's public lands and waters.

Coors, president of the brewing division of the Adolph Coors Company, reaffirmed Hodel's comments, saying, "Long after this money is spent, it will continue to have an impact. It is more of an investment than a grant. The waterfowl and the hundreds of other species that use wetlands will be its beneficiaries. Someday, in the distant future, some youngster somewhere in North America will gaze up and see the magnificent waterfowl that will be produced on the lands this money will secure. The 600,000 members of Ducks Unlimited are proud that we've conserved the resource for those who will follow."

Ducks Unlimited was organized in 1937 to help perpetuate North American waterfowl and other wildlife through the preservation and restoration of wetlands in breeding areas in Canada, where the majority of the continent's ducks and geese are produced. Recently DU has expanded its efforts to include wetland preservation in the United States, as well as protection of wintering areas for waterfowl in Mexico.

Sale of the Duck Stamp, known formally as the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, is the principal way that money is raised for the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. The stamp must be purchased by all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older. About two million hunters and other conservationists buy the \$7.50 revenue stamp each year to conserve the habitat on which waterfowl depend for nesting and feeding. Since 1934, more than 3.5 million acres of wetlands for wildlife have been acquired for the National Wildlife Refuge System through the Duck Stamp program.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission acts as the federal government's "real estate agent" for migratory birds. It studies areas proposed as migratory bird refuges and evaluates their locations and acquisition costs, and ultimately decides which areas will be purchased or leased and added to the refuge system. The commission includes Hodel, Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block, Secretary of Transportation Elizabeth H. Dole, Senators Thad Cochran and David Pryor, Representatives Silvio Conte and John Dingell, and the chief conservation officer of each State where a land purchase is proposed.